

Opening Statement
Rep. Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology
Hearing

Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD) Act of 2009

Wednesday, April 1, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Gordon, for scheduling this hearing to receive testimony on draft authorization legislation for the federal government's Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD) program. Currently, the NITRD (*NIGHTER-DEE*) program provides the primary mechanism by which the federal government coordinates this nation's more than 3 billion dollars of unclassified networking and information technology (NIT) research and development (R&D) investments.

As I stated in our last NITRD hearing, given the ever increasing amounts of networking and information technology that affect our everyday lives from power grid and water purification systems to automotive improvements and air traffic control equipment to home health-care devices and educational software programs, it is important that we not only continue to support these R&D efforts but also make sure that this program is appropriately coordinating with our classified cybersecurity initiatives as well. In fact, I believe that this is of vital importance to our homeland security and to our economy.

It is my understanding that at this moment, a computer worm called Conficker C may be affecting millions of computers in ways that we can not even completely identify yet. Whether this pans out to be a serious threat or simply a perceived threat, the ability for people to create this kind of computer havoc is a real problem. So, I would suggest that non-classified cybersecurity efforts are just as important. Hopefully, our witnesses will address that today, as well.

I know that your staff has been working diligently with mine to put together good, solid legislation, and I appreciate this bipartisan effort. The draft before us is a culmination of recommendations from the PCAST Report, feedback we have received from numerous organizations, and witness testimony received in a hearing held on this topic last year. I am sure we will learn today that there are yet more ways we can improve this bill, and I hope that we can continue to work together to ensure that it moves forward in a bipartisan fashion and with bipartisan support.

I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses today and their recommendations about how we can make an already exemplary interagency program even better.